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LETTER

TO

A Friend in the Country :

Being a Vindication of the Parliaments
whole Proceedings this last Session.

With the State of the *PLOT*, and manner of
its Discovery.

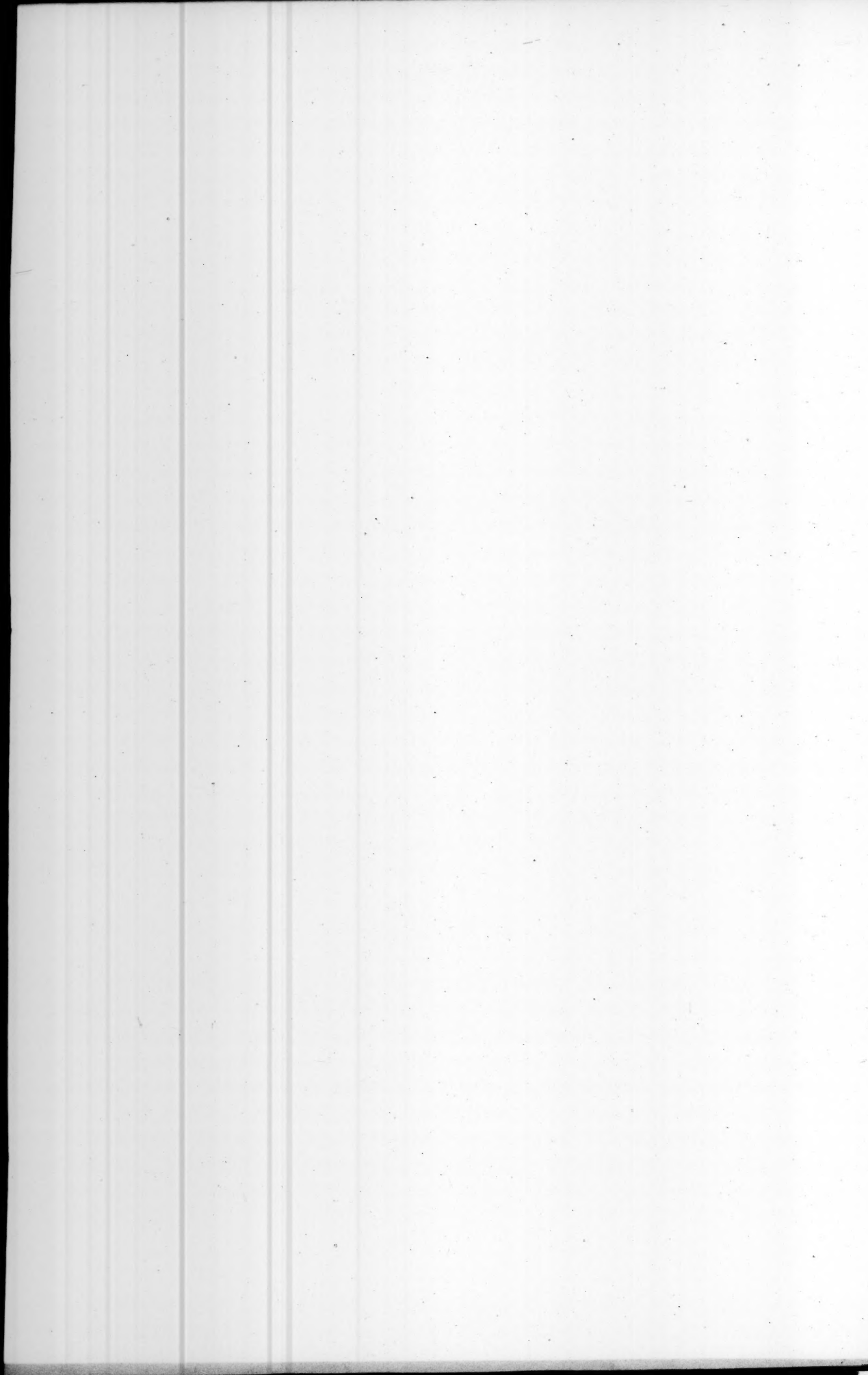
S I R,

I Receiv'd yours of the 20th. instant, wherein I perceive some disaffected Person hath been labouring with you, to give you an evil Character of this present Parliament ; as also to occasion in you some Jealousie concerning the Truth of this Plot, by reason of the dependance you say it hath upon two single persons Evidence, viz. Mr. Oates, and Mr. Bedlow : Therefore since you are pleas'd to condescend so far as to relie upon my poor Judgment, and desire my Opinion in the matter, I shall to the best of my power present you with the state of the Case.

The many and great Advantages that of late years have accrued to the Popish Party, from the success of the *French* Arms abroad, (whereby they hoped in time of need to be assisted here at home) first emboldned them to undertake this Design, which was then on foot of subverting our Religion and Government. This made them despise and with ill to the Emperor, and King of *Spain*, because (though they were no less Catholick than the other) they were not so ready at hand, nor so necessary for the carrying on of their Design, as would be *Lewis* the 14th. if he proved successful : wherefore nothing could be ill, nothing could be dishonourable that he acted. Now however at this time I can laugh as heartily at any design of a Massacre from the Papists, as any one ; yet on the other side I must affirm, that had not this Plot been discover'd, nothing was more feasible : when the King had been destroy'd, and a Popish Successor establish'd, that all had been Traytors who opposed him ; when all Offices of Trust were put into the hands of Papists, as *Hull* was then in the hands of the Lord *Bellasis*, &c. when all the Commonalty of *England* were (by that Statute for the Preserving of the Game) disarm'd, and not left so much as a Musquet or Pocket-Pistol, for fear of killing a Popish Bird ; when we had a mercenary Army on foot, ready rais'd and fill'd with Popish Officers, to have joyn'd that Party at an hours warning ; when the *French* was ready to have assisted them with Men, Money, and Ammunition, being through their contrivance at Peace with all the rest of the World ; when at the same time the *Spaniards* (under the name of Pilgrims) had design'd to Land amongst us 12 or 14000 men, which is attested by a Captain who was on board their Fleet, before they were dispers'd by ill weather ; when all our own Ships had been bestow'd upon Popish Commanders ; when all our strong Forts and Militia had been under the conduct of Popish Officers ; when at the same time our City had been Fired, and every man taking care of his own particular concern, so that none were left to mind the publick ; when you might have search'd twenty Houses, before you met with one that had more Arms in it, than some old rusty Gun or Pistol, and that perhaps without either Flint, Powder, or Bullet : when all these things concurr'd together, as they did at the time of the Plots discovery, you must needs confesse, That they had it in their Power to act Massacres, or any other Villanies they pleas'd. But now, Sir, blessed be God the Scene is chang'd, and however it is to be fear'd that

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their wicked Engines are still at work, yet I cannot but hope the best, since this prodigious Discovery. For having observed the miraculous Providence of Almighty God, who in the midst of these our Troubles hath raised us up such a Parliament, whose Wisdom is sufficient to search into the most intricate designs of our Enemies, whose Religion prevails above the Superstition of our Adversaries, whose Courage flights their *Godserving* Tenents, and whose Wealth and Fortunes are sufficient to condemn all Indirect Bribes or Pensions, knowing no other Service but that of the Publick. Having likewise observ'd the stupendious love and care which the great Creator hath had for our protection, in his wonderful Discovery of this so general and so damnable a Plot; how he first rais'd up Mr. *Oates*, to be an Instrument of their detection; whose single Evidence being censured for want of a second, how (according to that old saying, *Quas Jupiter vult perdere, prius dementat*) God so blinded that Popish Party, as to suffer them to commit that execrable Murder upon that worthy Magistrate Sir *Edmondbury Godfrey*, who as he had made the Plot known in his Life, so did he make it be believ'd by his Death: After this, how the Almighty rais'd up Mr. *Bedlow*, who by his Testimony did not only discover the aforesaid horrid Murder, but also in the main confirm'd the former Evidence of Mr. *Oates*: And then, when their Evidence grew something cold, and to be censured for their reflections upon some Great Persons, how he likewise rais'd up first Mr. *France*, next Mr. *Dugdale*, and then Mr. *Everard*, together with divers Letters and Writings, which did not only confirm the former Evidence; but were of themselves sufficient to prove the verity of this Plot, meerly by Circumstances, admitting Mr. *Oates* and Mr. *Bedlow* to be as great Lyars as the Papists report them to be. Having thus therefore observ'd such a Chain of Providence link'd in our defence, I cannot but rely upon it, and hope that the Storm may light more heavy upon our Enemies, than our selves. However, if any amongst us have betray'd us into ruine, when it comes, I am sure for our parts we shall have the same satisfaction which *Aepus's* little Fishes had, who being pursued to shoar by the great ones, when the little ones lay broiling in the Sun, and just before they gave up the Ghost, they had the pleasure to behold those great Fish (who had brought them into that ruine) to lie broiling as well as themselves. And this, Sir, is what I have to inform you of concerning the Plot.

But now concerning our *True English Parliament*, As every *English-man* is represented by them, so ought every *English-man* to justify their Proceedings; he that reflects upon them, reflects upon you, me, and every one; whereas he that vindicates them, vindicates himself. Therefore in right of the People who chose them, give me leave to justify their Proceedings unto you, against all such Objections as their enemies have suggested.

First then, The *Papists* (whose only interest it is to speak against them, and therefore all who do so are such) have under the pretence of Friends and moderate Church of *England-men*, inveigh'd against the Proceedings of this Parliament, as too hot and too rash both against *Thomas Earl of Danby*, and *James Duke of York*; never considering that a man cannot be too zealous in a good Cause, and now the Nation lyes at stake, *Non progredi est regredi*, to be lukewarm would be to countenance the Plot. What! would they have *Danby* banish'd? bid him take up his Bed and walk? A pretty punishment for a man that is guilty of so many Crimes, that he wanted words to express them by: You have ruin'd the Nation, couzen'd the King of so much Money, go 20 miles off and enjoy it; if this be all, *England* is the cheapest Treason-Ordinary in the World. If he had robb'd a man upon the High-way of a Crown, (although to rescue himself from starving) he had surely died: but now having committed so much greater Crimes, it will be clemency (forsooth) to pardon him: *Parva scelera puniuntur, magna in triumphis feruntur*, As the Pirate said to *Alexander*, *Because I rob with but one Ship, I am a Rogue, a Pirate, and deserve hanging, but you that rob with a hundred are for so doing call'd a great and gallant Prince.*

In the next place, I will acquaint you something concerning this Lord's Pardon, whereof I presume you cannot but have heard. It is a Pardon that comprehends all the Crimes that mankind could invent, although perhaps all little enough too for so great a sinner; however this Pardon is the chief and only Plea he depends on, saying, it was granted him by the King, and therefore 'tis good in Law.

Here first, Although I deny not that it came from the King, yet every good Subject hath great reason to believe that he never acquainted his Majesty, either of what Crimes he was guilty, or what Crimes were comprehended in the Pardon, for we are all too well assured of his Majesty's Justice, to believe he would have granted such a Pardon wittingly: Therefore this Pardon may rather be said to have been stolen from the King, than granted by him; also its not passing through all the Offices, (which were appointed only to prevent such Pardons as these) shew in what an illegal and clandestine manner it was obtain'd.

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But secondly, Admitting it did come from the King, yet is it at best but a disputable thing whether it be therefore good; I am sure if it is good, the consequences are evil; since if a Pardon stands good against such an Impeachment in Parliament, what redress hath the Subject (notwithstanding all his *Magna Charta*) against any Courtier, who when he hath ravish'd his Wife or murder'd his Children, produces such a Pardon from his Master? Is not the King in this case as absolute as the great Turk, when he may send for our Heads in a black Box, since 'tis but pardoning the Messenger that fetches them?

Lastly, As to the manner of his Trial, if any Person reflects upon the Commons Proceedings in that Matter, it shews that he had not a true understanding of their Reasons, since quitting the least part of their Right, might perhaps have been a means of saving all the other five Lords in the Tower, as well as the Earl of *Danby*; And if the Spiritual Lords had no Right to sit and Vote at his Trial, which 'tis not yet proved they had, then the Commons had as much reason to oppose it, as one of us have reason to except against the Sons being on the Jury for the Father, from whom he hath receiv'd his whole Estate. And this I hope may prove satisfactory to you in behalf of the Commons, and may also suffice in answer to all those, who condemn them for their Proceedings against *Thomas Earl of Danby*.

The next thing wherewith they are charg'd, is their Bill for the excluding of *James Duke of York*, as if it were not only hard measure to accuse him without being heard, but also unjust to exclude the Heir to the Crown upon any account whatsoever.

First, That it is not hard measure to exclude him without being heard is evident, for that several Letters from Cardinal *Howard*, the Pope's Nuncios, and other grand Papists, in Answer to what he had either sent or caus'd to be sent, shew him to be the Original of this Plot, both against the King's Person and Government, as it hath already been voted in the House of Commons.

Secondly, For that his being a *Roman Catholic*, must of necessity produce some ill effects against the Life of his most Sacred Majesty, (whether he be consenting thereunto or no) since nothing would so highly advance the Popish Interest as the Duke's being King; whereas if he were a Protestant, they could have no advantage by plucking down one Protestant to set up another.

Thirdly, A Prince doth not run so much hazard from any Person living as from his next Heir, whose Attainder (if he kills him) is immediately wiped off by the Crown.

Here some may object and say, *Why had it not been a better way to have proceeded by a Summons and an Impeachment?*

To which I answer, That the Parliament had too lately had experience what a tedious and difficult way that of an Impeachment was, from the Proceedings against the Earl of *Danby*; and if the Trial of a Treasurer was so impeded, how much more unaccessible would the next Heir to the Crown have been, where every one would sing a *Placebo* to the rising Sun.

Secondly, Others will have it to be unjust to exclude the next Heir from the Crown upon any account whatsoever; but this I will prove to be contrary to the Law of Nature and Custom of all Nations.

First, That it is contrary to the Law of Nature and Reason, to suppose that the King and Parliament together cannot alter the Succession, is evident, since the Heir apparent may sometimes happen to be a Fool, a Mad-man, a Turk, a Heretick, or one deprived of his Senses, from whom nothing but publick ruine could be expected, should the Government be put into his hands: Which doth sufficiently prove, that propinquity of Birth or Blood, without other circumstances, is not alone sufficient to be prefer'd to a Crown, for that no Reason or Law, Religion, or Wisdom in the World, can admit such Persons to the guidance of a Commonwealth, from whom no good and nothing but destruction can be expected; Government being in its primitive institution ordain'd for the benefit of the Publick, and not for its destruction.

Secondly, That it is lawful for King and Parliament to alter the Succession, is evident from the Law of all Nations: And here let us begin with the People of *Israel*, (1 Reg. 8.) to whom, after God had granted the same Government of Kings that other neighbouring Nations had, (and whose Kings did then rule by Succession as ours now do) yet nevertheless God did at the very beginning and first entrance of their Kings plainly shew, that though this Law of Succession by birth and propinquity should for the most part prevail, yet that it was not so precisely necessary, but that upon just Causes it might be alter'd: As for instance, 'Albeit he made *Saul* a true and lawful King over the *Jews*, yet after his death, God suffer'd not any one of his generation to succeed him, notwithstanding he left behind him many Children, and among others *Ishboseth*, a Prince of 40 years of age, (2 Reg. 1 and 21.) whom *Abner* the General Captain

Captain of that Nation follow'd for a time as his lawful Lord and Master by Succession, until God reprov'd him for it, and induced him to cleave unto *David* newly elected King, who was a stranger by birth, and no a kin at all to the King deceas'd. Now if any shall reply here, That God put by *Saul* for his sins, that is no Answer at all to us; for we pretend not that a Prince who is next in blood, can be justly put by but for his own defects. Again, After *David* was thus invest'd with the Crown, yet do we not find the Law of Succession to be perform'd to any of his elder Sons, nor to any of their off-spring or descents, but only to *Solomon* who was his younger and tenth Son.

The next example of this kind among the *Israelites* was that of Prince *Rehoboam*, lawful Son and Heir to King *Salomon*, who after his Father's death, refusing the Peoples request, to take off some heavy Impositions which were laid upon them by his Father, they deni'd to admit him for their King, (3. Reg. 11.) but rather chose one *Jeroboam*, *Rehoboam's* Servant, that was a meer stranger, and but of poor parentage, making him their King, and God approved thereof, as the Scripture in expresse words doth testifie: And when *Rehoboam* that took himself to be openly injured hereby, would by Arms have pursued his Title, and had gather'd together an Army of an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen Souldiers, (as good as any *French Janizaries*) to punish these Rebels, as he calls them, (5. Reg. 12. 21.) God appear'd unto one *Semei* a holy man, and bade him go to the Camp of *Rehoboam*, and tell them plainly, that he would not have them fight against their Brethren, who had chosen another lawful King. Now if God permitted and allow'd of this in his own Common-wealth, which was to be the example and pattern of all others that should ensue, no doubt but he approveth also the same in other Realms, viz. that the ordinary Line of Succession be alter'd, when just occasions are offer'd, either for his Service, the good of the People and Realm, or else for the punishment of the Plots, sins, and wickednesses of some particular Princes.

Having thus therefore shew'd you the most authentick Presidents and Authorities out of Scripture, I shall for brevity sake (as unwilling to turn an Epistle into a Volume) omit those innumerable other examples, which I could here produce out of all other Histories and Kingdoms, as well ancient as modern, both from *Greece*, *Rome*, *Spain*, *France*, and other Countreys, and will only touch upon *England*, and so conclude this Point.

To begin then first with King *Edward*, who dying in the year 900. left behind him two Sons lawfully begotten of his Wife *Edgina*, *Edmond* and *Ethelred*, and a third illegitimate Son, whose Name was *Adelstan*, born of a Concubine; but yet forasmuch as this base Son *Adelstan* was esteem'd to be of more valour than either of the other two, he was preferr'd to the Crown before them, although they were legitimate and he not, *Polyd. hist. Ang. lib. 5.* In fine, He that will consider the passing of the Crown of *England*, from the death of *Edmond Ironside*, (elder Son of King *Ethelred*) until the possession thereof gotten by *William Duke of Normandy*, may easily see, what Authority the Commonwealth hath in such Affairs, to alter Titles of Succession, according as publick necessity shall require. Again, After the Conquest, we see the Conquerour's eldest Son *Robert Duke of Normandy* disinherited, and his two younger Brethren, *William Rufus*, and *Henry the First*, preferr'd before him. But to conclude this Point, I need trouble you with no other Arguments, to prove how justifiable such an exclusion of the next Heir is by our Laws, since by the (13th. of *Eliz.*) he is guilty of a *præmunure*, who affirms that the King and Parliament together cannot alter the Succession.

This, Sir, is all that I can say in the Matter, which if it may prove effectual to convince you of your former Error, of the Parliaments being too hot, you will then with me desire nothing more, than that they or their Ghosts rise again with the same brave Spirits they left us, and fall upon the same Subject, to wit, the Trial of the Traitors; so will our Enemies get no advantage by this Privilege, so will the *French*, the Pope and the Devil, have just occasion of mourning, when the cause of that *Triumvirate* is in so great danger. This, Sir, is all at present, from the Person in the World that loves and honours you most.

Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

J. P.

